

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Economic Development Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 3, 2008, 8:00 a.m.
Development Department, 95 Merrick Way, Suite 450, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	COMMISSIONERS
Richard DeWitt	P	P	P	P*	P	P	P	X	P	E	A	P	Mayor Donald D. Slesnick II
Ray Zomerfeld	A	P	P	P	E	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	Vice Mayor William Kerdyk, Jr.
Gladys Diaz Jourdain	P	P	E	P	P	E	P	X	P	E	P	P	Commissioner Maria Anderson
Dr. Al Smith	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	X	P	P	P	P	Commissioner Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
James Casey	A	E	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	E	P	Commissioner Wayne "Chip" Withers

*Present via telephone.

STAFF:

Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark, Development Director
Jessica Wotherspoon

A = Absent

E = Excused Absence

P = Present

X = No Meeting

() = Special Meetings

GUESTS: Interim City Manager Maria Alberro-Jimenez; Historic Preservation Officer Kara Kautz; Carol Ellis-Cutler, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce

RECORDING SECRETARY: Nancy C. Morgan, Coral Gables Services, Inc.

Meeting Motion Summary:

Minutes of the November 5, 2008 meeting of the Economic Development Board were approved.

Economic Development Board Chair Richard DeWitt called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. A quorum was reached.

I. Approval of November 5, 2008 Economic Development Board Meeting Minutes:

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2008 meeting as presented.

Mr. Casey seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

II. City Update: Interim City Manager Maria Alberro-Jimenez:

Ms. Alberro-Jimenez updated Board members about the City's current economic, investment and pension challenges, as well as expectations of clearing up some open issues in advance of hiring the new City Manager. She then responded to Board questions pertaining to the Building and Zoning Department's ISO rating decrease and opportunities to raise the rating. Mr. Casey suggested consideration of consolidating the Building Official and Building Director positions. Also discussed were the City's bond agency rating, the current evaluation process, current City reserves, State of Florida pension plan, unions and the provisions of the DROP plan.

III. Briefing on Proposed Tax Incentive Program for Historic Commercial Properties by City Historical Resources Officer Kara Kautz:

Ms. Kautz comprehensively described the background of this tax incentive program (modeled on a Broward County program) currently being developed with the City Commission for historic commercial properties, after which she presented an update on the process. The original intent of the program was for the North Ponce de Leon apartment area, and the Broward County model was the only one that applied to small apartment buildings. The purpose of the program is to preserve these smaller, historical buildings. At present, there is no incentive in place to encourage their preservation and prevent their demolition.

Present efforts are underway to devise ways to modify the program to address Commission concerns about future economic growth as more properties meet the threshold for designation. Under consideration is whether or not the program will apply to specific types of buildings (commercial vs. multi-family), specific areas of the City, specific time periods, etc. A draft of the program will be presented to the Commission in January.

Ms. Kautz expressed excitement about the potential of the program as no one else in the State of Florida has undertaken this effort. She described Miami-Dade County's objection to the program (as the property appraiser), the City's argument that buildings were designated based on experience, architecture and the significant aspects of the buildings. The State Attorney General upheld the City's argument, and there is an effort underway to encourage the County to also adopt such a program. The benefit to the City of preserving these buildings is deemed more significant than the cost of the program. Ms. Diaz Jourdain suggested this as an excellent project for an intern, who could help with the time-consuming project of quantifying the data and developing a strategy. Explaining her experience with this type of project, Ms. Diaz Jourdain volunteered to help the Historical Resources Department with the project. There followed a discussion about past studies for the North Ponce area, a master plan and other historical commercial buildings in the City.

IV. Review/Consideration of New Lease at 2325 Galiano Street per City Procurement Code Requirements:

In compliance with Procurement Code requirements and with no action required by the Board, Ms. Rivenbark briefed the Board on an issue with a lease at 2325 Galiano Street, retail space situated directly under the City's parking garage. The City moved to evict the tenant on the basis of improper insurance and for using the space inconsistent with the lease. The lessee has the right to exercise another ten-year option as well as an assignment provision; however, the City does not think it is in its best interest to continue the relationship. Discussion focused on current litigation issues, lease options, efforts to determine a new tenant, economic impacts on the City and negotiations.

V. Response to a Changing Economy:

- a. Retail Vacancy/Program Development: Ms. Wotherspoon displayed a map featuring Miracle Mile, pointing out vacancies, explaining that many are undergoing renovations or the permitting process and indicating current rates. The map is the basis for a developing strategy to identify opportunities and engage in more proactive recruitment efforts. Of 32 vacant properties, 16 are committed and 16 are available. Staff, working collaboratively with the BID, is examining themes to foster team recruitment, a program to development meaningful changes, national trends and local needs. A discussion ensued about differences between open air retail and mall leasing, including a suggestion to look at the identity of Miracle Mile as clusters of harmonious retail could work well.
- b. Ms. Rivenbark distributed a briefing paper for Board reading purposes issued by the City Manager's office for the City Commission on the City's lease with Merrick Park (as tenant). She summarized the content.
- c. League of Cities Stimulus Package: Ms. Rivenbark reported that the City applied to the federal government through the League of Cities for a stimulus package that includes \$24 million and at least 345 jobs. Public infrastructure will be the primary focus at the federal and state levels. The City has submitted ready-to-go projects for consideration.

VI. Updates:

- a. Miracle Mile/Giralda Avenue Sidewalk Program: To date, Ms. Rivenbark reported, merchants have not yet proposed participating in the funding of the program. In the interim, a plan is being developed conditioned on including the merchants in the funding as well as the City.
- b. City Attainable Housing Program: Javier Betancourt, the person who provided updates on the program, left to accept a position at the Downtown Development Authority for the City of Miami. Staff will meet with the Planning Department to discuss forward movement.

- c. DYL: Representatives of DYL will be scheduled for the December 16 City Commission meeting.
- d. Signage Process: Report postponed to the next meeting.
- e. Country Club Negotiations: A letter of intent was issued, to which the proposer responded. Changes are being incorporated, which include a possible change in the opening date.

VII. Additional Business:

- a. As Mr. DeWitt and Mr. Casey will be out of town for the scheduled January 7, 2009 Board meeting, each Board member will present his/her individual Board goals for 2009 at the February meeting.
- b. City Manager Search: Ms. Rivenbark reported that a search consultant was hired to conduct a national search. She elaborated on the procedures undertaken by the consultant, and stated that the City Commission anticipates receiving a "short list" of the top ten candidates in January, which will be narrowed down to the top five. The process may include interaction with the public. If the current schedule remains, a selection announcement could be made as early as February, not to include immediate occupancy. The Commission is in agreement in terms of their hopes and expectations for the new City Manager.
- c. Miracle Mile/Economic Development: Ms. Ellis-Cutler offered the resources of Coral Gables Chamber to assist with funding efforts to market Miracle Mile.
- d. City Properties: In response to a question at the previous Board meeting during discussion of workforce housing, Ms. Wotherspoon reported the location of the two City-owned properties outside its physical boundaries.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Next Economic Development Board Meeting: Wednesday, January 7, 2009, 8:00 a.m., Development Department conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Swanson Rivenbark
Development Director
Secretary to the Economic Development Board

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